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The Mutilated Tree of Olene, Oregon

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Emma Andrus
(The Mutilated Trees of)
Olene, Oregon

decapitated,
the trees that line the roadside fields of Olene
fill me with a sorrow clear as amber
muddied by the broken down houses
the shoddy shingles lined with moss and mold
cracked window-panes
where i imagine the wide eyes of hungry children staring.
po' white trash,
i know these children.
i grew up in the rusted cabs of model A pickups
playing witchcraft in the dust
and standing in line with my mother at the food-bank.
a trailer full of boxes of books
and the desiccated paint tubes
of a painter who didn't paint anymore.
Olene, Oregon, is not so far from Clinton, Montana,
with its shaggy horses whose ribs poke sharp through their hides,
oxidized cans
and barbed wire.
government cheese is universal.

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